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Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forest

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I live in the town of Crested Butte and I am a hybrid backcountry skier who spends approximately 50 days a winter backcountry skiing in Gunnison National Forest. The only vehicle I own to get myself and my snowmobile to a trailhead is my Prius. 98% of the time I spend in the backcountry during the winter is spent walking up hill enjoying the scenery, 1% is going down hill on some of the best backcountry ski terrain in the country, and 1% is traveling on a snowmobile accessing this terrain.

The reason for this letter is to express my concern for the potential closure of this access to myself, the friends I travel in the backcountry with and future generations. I am also concerned about the safety concerns of this closure. As a first responder I am very concerned of the dangers of putting a lot of users into a very small area. The backcountry is becoming more popular and access needs to be increased to ensure safety of all user groups. I, like many others, use my snowmobile to access terrain that holds a deeper, often less avalanche prone snowpack than that is close to town. I also have my snowmobile as a safety tool which is able to provide a quick and safe trip back to the trailhead if there were an accident or an injury of myself, a member of my group, or a backcountry user in need. This backcountry terrain offers many dangers and the availability of snowmobiles in these areas provides a large margin of safety that is not built into Plans B & D.

Specific areas of concern:

Poverty Gulch

This is one of my favorite backcountry ski areas. Plan D does not allow backcountry users to bring their snowmobiles into Baxter Basin. This limits the excess to this area and the basins that extend from this basin. Having a snowmobile in this area allows for a greater margin of safety for the users in this area because of the speed and ability to assist injured users.

Mistake in Plan A representing Brush Creek

Brush Creek is a large area that currently allows OSV use but Plan A does not accurately show it. Please represent Plan A accurately to the current use and provide this public land access to the current user groups in Plans, B, C and D. If this was removed it would deny access to a large portion of our public lands and access to ski Teocalli would be near impossible to most.

Pearl Pass Area

This area can only be accessed safely a few days out of a year, but this current access allows OSV users to travel up Pearl Pass Road an area that is allowed to Summer motorized users to get to Pear Pass. Because I only own a Prius to get my snowmobile to the trailhead, it would be preventative for myself being able to drive 6 hours around to Ashcroft to snowmobile to Pear Pass to access this terrain via snowmobile. Please open this corridor to OSV use.

East Brush Creek

Upper East Brush Creek currently allows OSV use and Plan D eliminates this access to our public lands. Please keep this access to the Pear Pass area and please allow access in Lower Brush Creek for OSV so more users

can access this Public Land.

Crystal Pass / Tilton Pass

Plan D eliminates the possibility for OSV users to travel to Aspen. It also prevents access to ski Taylor and Star Peaks. Please keep this access to our Public Land so users can access this terrain.

The Beckwiths and Oh-Be-Joyful

There is some confusion about the Beckwiths and Oh-Be-Joyful areas. These areas are currently open and allow OSV to access the terrain in them but the PDF version of Plan A incorrectly represents this area. Plan D would eliminate Oh-Be-Joyful from being accessed via OSV. I would like to see these areas open to OSV as they currently are to allow OSV recreationalists to spread out and recreate in a deep snowpack.

Reducing access to public Lands for OSV users would not benefit Gunnison County. There would also be a large economic impact of reducing this access. Mental health greatly improves when allowed access to Public Lands. Please increase access to these Public Lands so more people can benefit from them in every facet of life. I have greatly benefited from the use of these Public Lands and it is my hope that myself, my friends that travel in these areas and future generations are able to enjoy these areas in the future.

Thank you for your time,

Community Member of Crested Butte, Colorado